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Human Services budget, led by Sen. Hardiman, moves to full Senate

LANSING – The Senate Appropriations Committee approved the Department of Human Services budget today, cutting almost \$29 million from the general fund from the governor’s recommendation while maintaining essential programs, Sen. Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood, announced today.

“Even in this tough budget climate, we’re continuing to support programs that move our neediest neighbors to self-sufficiency,” said Hardiman, who chairs the Senate Appropriations Department of Human Services subcommittee. “It wasn’t easy to cut from this budget. Still, we found money to support fatherhood and marriage programs, and a specialized foster-care program that helps Kent County residents.”

The budget provides the department, formerly called the Family Independence Agency, with \$4.4 billion for the 2006 fiscal year. Lawmakers are faced with closing a \$475.5 million budget hole without raising taxes.

Hardiman’s subcommittee recommended reducing spending by preventing of waste and abuse, encouraging privatization of services, and streamlining services to prevent duplication.

The budget also restored funding to programs that the governor proposed cutting. The governor had proposed eliminating funding for marriage and fatherhood initiatives. The committee approved \$500,000 for the fatherhood and \$25,000 for an elderly food program in Kent County.

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